1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri

is at least partially countervailed by conspicuous biotic characters, such as color, stature, etc., so distinctive as almost to seem specific: the Seri are distinctively dark-skinned, their extreme color-range (so far as known) being less than their nearest approach to any neighboring tribe; they are nearly as distinctive in stature, the difference between their tallest and shortest normal adults being apparently less than that between their shortest and the tallest of the neighboring Papago—though they are not so far from the more variable and often tall Yaqui; and they appear to be no less distinctive in such physiologic processes as those connected with their extraordinary food habits. Still more distinctive are the demotic characters connected with their habits of life and modes of thought; and when the sum of biotic and demotic characters is taken, the Seri are found to be set apart from all neighboring Sonoran tribes by differences much more striking than the individual range among themselves.[1]

It is especially noteworthy that the Seri have held aloof from that communality of the deserts which has brought so many tribes into union with each other and with their animal and vegetal neighbors through common strife against the common enemies of sun and sand—the communality expressed in the distribution of vital colonies over arid plains, in the toleration and domestication of animals, in the development of agriculture, and eventually in the shaping of a comprehensive solidarity, with the intelligence of the highest organism as the controlling factor.[2] Dwelling on a singularly prolific shore, the Seri never learned the hard lesson of desert solidarity, but looked on the land merely as a place of lodgment or concealment, or as a source of luxuries such as cactus tunas, mesquite beans, and tasty game; they never formed the first idea of planting or cultivating, and their only notion of harvesting and storing against time of need was the intolerably filthy one of nature's simplest teaching; they apparently never grasped the concept of cooperation with animals, and came to tolerate the parasitical coyote only in that its persistence was greater than their own, and in so far as it was stealthy enough to hide its travail and the suckling of its young against their ravening maws; and they apparently never rose to real recognition of their own kind in alien forms, but set their hands against agricultural and zoocultural humans as peculiarly potent and hence especially obnoxious animals. Naturally their racial intolerance was seed of battle and blood-feud; and they would doubtless have melted away under the general antagonism but for the natural barriers and unlimited food of their restricted domain.

At present, as for the later and best-known decades of their history,

[1] It seems probable that the Seri were scarcer in tribes of southern Baja California than in those of Sonora at the time of the earliest explorations, yet that the distinction was sufficiently strong to warrant the extension of the proposition to these tribes also.

[2] The Beginning of Agriculture, American Anthropologist, vol. VIII, 1895, p. 350. The Beginning of Zoöculture, ibid., vol. X, 1897, p. 295.